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RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1558
RUEHYD/AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE 0917
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0607
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0621

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NDJAMENA 000300

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF, AF/C, AF/SPG, D, DRL, DS/IP/ITA,
DS/IP/AF, H, INR, INR/GGI, PRM, USAID/OTI AND USAID/W FOR
DAFURRMT; LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICAWATCHERS; GENEVA FOR
CAMPBELL, ADDIS/NAIROBI/KAMPALA FOR REFCOORDS; ABUJA FOR
JOHN YATES

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/04/2014

TAGS: PGOV PHUM PREF ASEC CD SU

SUBJECT: DARFUR/CHAD: JEM'S KHALIL SKEPTICAL ON UN FORCE

Classified By: P/E Officer Haywood Rankin for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: In February 25 conversation with Ambassador Wall, JEM leader Khalil Ibrahim lamented the international community's focus on mounting a UN force in Darfur, when security, he claimed, was better than at any time since the rebellion began, even with intra-Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) fighting. The international community's emphasis, he said, needed to be on getting a peace agreement. He said that his effort to push disparate elements of the SLM to work together had been a long and not yet successful slog; but he put the blame for failure of the negotiating process entirely on the government of Sudan, and faulted the U.S. for inadequate pressure on Sudan. He said that the Darfur rebels wanted only regional autonomy not independence, but a genuine autonomy for a united Darfur with significant power for its leaders in Khartoum. He dismissed SPLM's Salva Kiir as a bush fighter without Garang's stature, incapable of holding his own in Khartoum and focused on southern independence. He dismissed Turabi as old and discredited. He said Sudan was sending in more troops into western Darfur, with a focus on Chad, not Darfur. It was pushing the janjaweed into Chad while restraining the Chadian rebels for the moment. Khalil thought that Sudan expected to fail in its objective of overthrowing Deby and removing Chad as rearguard area for the Darfur rebels but that it had its augmented forces there on defensive in case events in Chad turned in Sudan's favor and they could go on the offensive. Khalil regretted that heretofore Deby had not been more helpful to the Darfur rebels, but believed now there was a welcome mat in Ndjamena. End summary.

¶2. (C) Ambassador Wall and poloffs called on JEM leader Khalil Ibrahim at his suite at the Meridien Hotel on February 25. Khalil and his entourage had arrived a few days previously from northern Darfur, where he had been patching up relations with SLA factional leader Mini Minawi. He was ready now to go on to Abuja, although he was "not sure why" he was going, since the government of Sudan was not willing to deal. "One hand cannot clap", he noted. Much time had been wasted in Abuja. The key problem in the negotiations lay in the power-sharing arena, while wealth-sharing was pretty well wrapped up. How to ensure genuine autonomy? Per Khalil, Darfur had to be self-governing within a unified Sudan, a single entity, not three small states. Its governor

would have to be Darfuran, freely elected after an interim period. Darfur would participate in national power (including senior cabinet and military positions) and wealth proportional to its percentage of the population (45 percent, Khalil claims).

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WHITHER SUDAN
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¶3. (C) In response to the Ambassador's question, Khalil said that there would be a Darfuran vice president who would be a vice president for the whole nation, unlike Salva Kiir. If he had lived, John Garang would have insisted on a key role in governance of the whole nation, but Salva Kiir was only a bush fighter with little comprehension of the complexities in Khartoum. The SPLM came to Khalil for his guidance, Khalil claimed, but the SPLM under Salva Kiir was only fixated on the south and the referendum for independence. Khalil expressed skepticism that the Comprehensive Peace Agreement would survive or that the referendum would ever take place.

¶4. (C) Asked about the future role of Hasan al-Turabi, Khalil said Turabi was now too old to play an effective role. Only in the event that Ali Osman Taha and President Bashir fell out would Turabi be able to step forward, but in fact the whole leadership group in Khartoum, to include Sadiq al-Mahdi, was discredited. (Comment: Khalil did not volunteer any characterization of his own present relationship with Turabi. End Comment.)

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RELATING WITH THE SLA

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¶5. (C) Khalil said that his recent contacts with SLA factional leaders, including meetings in N'Djamena, had produced an improved relationship. Khalil claimed that the Sudanese government had paid SLM factional leader Abdelwahid 50 million dollars and offered him a position in the government, which had spurred him to announce nonparticipation in Abuja, which in turn spurred a revolt within his faction and a move to oust him. There had been fighting between SLA and JEM in certain contained areas, but the government of Chad had been helpful in setting the basis for negotiations. SLA factions had always evinced an aggressive attitude and spent much time fighting among themselves, but Mini Minawi gradually seemed to be maturing and was beginning to listen to Khalil. The balance of forces on the ground, Khalil claimed, was now sufficiently in JEM's favor that Mini was obliged to listen. Khalil recognized the vital importance of bringing all the rebel factions together. Even if they were not yet united, they seemed to be on the road to better coordination.

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CRITICISMS OF REHATTING
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¶6. (C) Khalil launched into a criticism of the move to create a UN force. He noted the irony that the rebels had wanted a UN force at the very beginning, when severe fighting was occurring. But the ceasefire was holding well. According to him, the security situation in Darfur was better than it had been since 2003, better than in 2004 or 2005. All the talk about a UN force was a distraction from the vital issue at hand, which was a peace agreement. It was also very expensive. Bring peace not troops and use the military money to rebuild Darfur, Khalil urged. Poloff FitzGibbon remarked that JEM may have been ready for peace, but the SLA had not been. Ambassador Wall said that it was wrong to speak of "improved security" in Darfur when Darfuran displaced persons so plainly lived in fear; the mandate for UN forces would likely be stronger than for the

African Union forces, permitting the UN to act against any violators whether government of Sudan or rebels.

¶7. (C) Khalil said that an infusion of foreign troops would only prompt the SLA to be more war-like. The Darfurian populace would not feel enhanced security no matter what the mandate of the UN forces was. They would not return to their villages under supposed protection of AU or UN until there was a full peace. An effort to carve out tranquil sectors would fail. In fact, the populace would actively oppose the UN, all the more when that effort comes now when security was considerably improved in Darfur. This move to bring in the UN had not convinced and would not convince the local people, the resistance fighters, or the government of Sudan -- i.e., no one in the field. Ambassador Wall said that there was no dispute that UN troops were no substitute for a peace agreement. Promoting such a force in no way diminished the intent to achieve a peace agreement. It was essential that Khalil and the other rebel leaders go to Abuja as soon as possible precisely in order to finalize a peace agreement.

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KHARTOUM TAKES AIM AT N'DJAMENA
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¶8. (C) Khalil said the government of Sudan was sending in more troops into western Darfur but Sudan's rationale was not Darfur but Chad. Sudan sought to overthrow Deby, Khalil thought, as the only way to defeat the rebellion in Darfur. In recent weeks, Sudan had pulled back the Chadian rebels from the border and put its augmented force in the Geneina area in a defensive posture. Meanwhile, it was pushing the janjaweed into Chad. Sudan seemed to expect to fail in this strategy of overthrowing Deby, but it had the Chadian rebels and its own forces ready in the event a favorable trend developed. Meanwhile, Darfurian unrest was spreading into Chad and stood to become increasingly worse in the East.

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¶9. (C) Khalil said his relations with Deby had much improved. He took credit for "saving" Deby and said he would continue to help him. He thought Deby was now over the hump of internal dissension and would survive. Dissension in Deby's home tribal area had eased. Deby had only lost "a part of a part of a faction" -- only a few of Deby's clan (the Bideiyat of the Zaghawa) had turned against him. The names of the deserters were big -- Sebi Aguid and Issaka Diar -- but not many had followed them in flight and some of those who had, had already returned to Chad.

¶10. (C) Ambassador Wall asked Khalil's view on a recent UN report that arms had come to the rebels via Eritrea, Chad, and Libya. Khalil responded, in the first place, that an emphasis on arms was wrong, since the ceasefire had been largely respected. Khalil contested the assertion by some observers that the rebels had respected the ceasefire only because they were small and weak. As for the source of arms, it was not necessary to speak of governments providing arms, but of money. The nature of the sahelian region was such that if one had money, one could purchase weapons and vehicles (but not tanks). One of Khalil's aides added that the Sudanese armed forces were an important source of arms for the rebels. Libya mainly acted on behalf of the government of Sudan, even if it also helped the rebels in an effort to maintain open channels. Chad should have done more than it had so far, but the atmosphere was much better now, with the arrival of Khalil's group in N'Djamena. Eritrea had been a substitute for Chad but it was too far away. Eritrea was now improving its relations with Sudan, while Chad was putting out the welcome carpet for the rebels, though Chad's actual help remained at a minimal level.

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ERITREA, CHAD, LIBYA
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¶11. (C) Khalil repeated that the peace agreement was the essential matter at hand. Without a peace agreement, even if he and other rebel leaders disappeared, others would rise up to continue the fight. He acknowledged that the great suffering of the Darfuran people hung in the balance with these political negotiations, though he said nothing about his own role in starting the rebellion, criticized U.S. and other international players for inadequate pressure on Sudan and wrong-headed emphasis on a UN force, and predicted that any UN force, with or without an agreement, would have its hands full in Darfur for the foreseeable future.

¶12. (C) Comment: Khalil's arguments against the deployment of UN troops is curious and could be an indication of Libyan influence over him or that the UN sanctions report struck a raw nerve. Libya has long-argued against Western troops in Darfur. Khalil's arguments also go against earlier rebel calls for such a deployment. We note that Khalil and SLM leader Minni Minawi's accounts of what they were doing on the border near Bahai differ somewhat. Minni claims Khalil did not go into Darfur. And finally, despite Khalil's claims to be helping Idriss Deby, there are a number of indications that the Chadian Government does not trust Khalil and that he may be playing a double game. For example, we have recently heard from a government source that a group of Chadian deserters from Bardai were assisted by Libya to reach Khalil near Bahai.

WALL